

NEW MENTAL HEALTH EVALUATION TEAM RECEIVES AWARD

By Paul Sacco, LCSW, LACDMH



On Thursday, November 5, 2015, the Gardena/Hawthorne Mental Evaluation Team (GHMET) was honored with the “Law Enforcement Recognition Award”, presented by the Gardena Police Foundation at their eighth annual dinner and awards ceremony. The team members include Patricia Pasillas, ASW, and Officer Sean Dixon of the Gardena Police Department.

Several local dignitaries were present, including the Gardena Chief of Police and California State Senator Isadore Hall. Invited Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH) guests included Irma Castaneda, Deputy Director, EOB; Miriam Brown, Program Manager III, EOB; Isabella Vidriales, MH Clinical Supervisor; and Nattaly Valenzuela-Meza, MH Clinical Supervisor. All present were there to support Pasillas and her police partner for their recognized efforts in providing “solutions to mental health-related issues” in the communities of both Gardena and Hawthorne.

In July 2015, GHMET initiated operations. The team is a partnership between the Gardena Police Department, Hawthorne Police Department and LACDMH. Following the co-response model, GHMET is made up of a police officer and clinician who, as a team, respond to emergency mental health calls for service in the community. The team provides emergent mental health services or appropriate linkages to other mental health services for the consumer, their family members or both. The team also provides

roll-call trainings for patrol officers as well as trainings in the community regarding mental health issues and co-response team method of services.

The GHMET was recognized for their ability to “fill a void” in the community as well as educate the public on mental health issues and reduce the stigma of people dealing with mental health problems. It was noted too that as of the inception date, GHMET has provided service to over 300 individuals that otherwise may have not been helped or might have been incarcerated.

Pasillas has been instrumental in helping to create such a successful co-response team. She works well with her partner, and her positive, can-do attitude has endeared her to both the Gardena and Hawthorne Police Departments. They consider her a “sister” and continually praise her clinical skills and professional, friendly and helpful demeanor.

Congratulations to Pasillas and Officer Dixon for your excellent work and well deserved Law Enforcement Recognition Award.